

finished" in speaking of a book of this sort, which is merely a collection of random papers?

I like only the passage on Goethe and Pascal; Suares says in it, and very well, excessive things, which first seemed right to me; but as I reflect on it now, I feel sure that his opinion of Goethe is the *easiest* one to have, the opinion that I myself have gone through; and that it is only since I got beyond that opinion that I really began to advance in culture.

If I spend a few days without playing my piano, the most beautiful page of music finds me without the sentiment to play it. The sentiment returns with my fingers* dexterity. Importance of the instrument; as soon as it is a good one, you discover in yourself some new skill in using it. A good pen is responsible for a fourth of my genius.

Perhaps the function creates the organ; but later the organ invites its functioning,

21 February

Another attack of vanity at the Charles Gides*, just now. An outburst of boasting (about the playing of my plays in Germany) for which Lafcadio, that evening, would have given himself a real stab in the thigh*. And in front of Gerard! How often I have chosen my cruelest lancet to open such an abscess on him! And how easy it would have been for him today to do the same to me! I appreciate his kindness in not doing so.

But as I left the Charles Gides', my head seemed in a vise just as when I should like to eat my words.

No matter how ridiculous my behavior is in this regard, I can explain it: when I feel that I do not have sufficient prestige, I try to force it, going about it as best I can with dreadful awkwardness, which would take that prestige away from me if I had it; whereupon I insist, exaggerate everything, and lose everything.

Fortunately, most of the time, scorn and contempt spare me such

confusion. The mere feeling of dignity ought to protect
me from it at all
times.

Departure for Cuverville. 22 February

Robidet, the keeper, tells fidouard while they are out
hunting:

"Ah! Mile Marie" (our old maid) "was a very witty
person! One

morning as I was coming into the kitchen, she
beckoned me to follow

her: *M*sieur Robidet, Just come and look at this,* she
says. She leads me

to the foot of the kitchen stairs, where the shoes to be
shined are lined

up on the last step: *Jfast take a look at the shoes of the
master's friends!¹

Then she shows them to me: one was missing a heel,
another had lost a

piece of sole, another was coming unsewed at the end
Ah, she

was very witty, Mile Marie!*